

AGENDA ITEM III A

PROPOSED NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AT EUNICE

Associate of Arts (A.A.) in Early Childhood Education (CIP Code 13.1204)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In June 2000, the Board of Regents received a proposal from Louisiana State University at Eunice for an Associate of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education. Faculty at two in-state institutions were selected to review the proposal. Reviewers' comments and institutional responses to these comments are reflected in the summary below.

STAFF SUMMARY

1. Description/Objectives

This is a two-year program designed to further the education of already employed childcare professionals and paraprofessionals. This program is also intended to prepare students for employment in early childhood education settings, as well as to give them the option of transferring to four-year institutions to complete baccalaureate degrees in early childhood or elementary education.

2. Curriculum/Program Design

At the completion of the 68-hour curriculum, students will be awarded an Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education. The reviewers and staff had several curricular concerns which LSU-E addressed as follows:

- Q. What is the specific focus of the proposed curriculum? Does it take into account the directions in which the discipline is moving?
- A. In keeping with the Guidelines for Associate Degree-Granting Institutions and Technical Schools of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), we aim to provide individuals currently working with young children or planning such a career a well-rounded education that will improve their efficacy at work and encourage their continuing professional development. NAEYC guidelines recommend that associate programs focus on at least two of the three periods of early childhood — infant/toddler, pre-primary, or primary school age. Our program will concentrate on the latter two, but will include instruction on infant and toddler development as part of required psychology and early childhood education courses.

- Q. A required course on infant development and/or teaching infants and toddlers is needed. A second course in early childhood education is needed (that could be the infant/toddler course or a “principles and practices” course).
- A. Infant and toddler development is covered in PSYC 2076, Child Psychology. The proposed curriculum includes EDCI 2020, Development and Methods in Early Childhood Education, which covers from birth to eight years old. This course has been in LSU-E’s inventory of courses for several years now.
- Q. There appears to be too many courses in the health and physical education area. It is not necessary to have a “movement and creativity” course planned when there is already a physical education course and two health courses required. The course syllabus for this course (EDCI 2028) should include movement for young children. It also may be more appropriate to offer a general early childhood education course as opposed to a course on literacy.
- A. The health and physical education courses, the art course, and the movement and creativity course are intended to provide a comprehensive training program that meets the criteria in NAEYC’s “Guidelines for Associate Degree-Granting Institutions and Technical Schools.” Additionally, we have included EDCI 2027, Fostering Literacy in Young Children, in response to a national focus on literacy in the education of young children.
- Q. The students should have two field experiences in the EDCI 2020 course. They should be observing child development as a field experience, so that particular course should have a lab with it. Students need the 2900 course to actually practice teaching.
- A. We agree with the consultants’ recommendation and will modify EDCI 2020 (see course syllabus) to include a second field experience for a total of 24 observation hours.
- Q. There is no discussion concerning articulation with a four-year program. It would strengthen the proposal to list courses that would/would not articulate into a four-year degree.
- A. As discussed in the Request for Authority to Offer a New program (Part III: Students), principal sources of students for this program will come from Head Start programs, teachers’ aides, and early childhood education paraprofessionals. Students from these groups are typically non-traditional, place-bound students who seek an associate degree to maintain their current employment or to improve their professional training in early childhood education. Because of family obligations and employment, many of these students are unable to transfer to a four-year college or university to earn a baccalaureate degree.

If a student decides to transfer to McNeese State University to earn a baccalaureate

degree in early childhood education, 46 credit hours will transfer into that program based on the current published articulation agreement between LSU-E and McNeese State University. Similarly, LSU-E students who complete the proposed associate degree could transfer 49 credit hours into the UL-Lafayette baccalaureate degree program in elementary education. Students who decide to pursue the baccalaureate degree in elementary education at LSU A&M could transfer 38 credit hours into that program. The Department of Human Ecology at LSU A&M offers a B.S. in Family, Child, and Consumer Sciences with a concentration in Nursery School and Kindergarten Teaching. Twenty-five (25) credit hours from the proposed associate degree program would transfer into this program.

- Q. Since preschools and kindergartens in the public schools are required to have certified teachers with bachelor's degrees in early childhood education, the practicum for the students should be "limited" to classrooms of certified early childhood teachers.
- A. LSU-E agrees with the consultants, and supervising teachers will be certified early childhood teachers.
- Q. It is suggested that an advisory council composed of early childhood experts from Head Start and the local school system be established to provide guidance.
- A. Steps are being taken to establish an advisory council composed of early childhood experts from Head Start and the local school system. Persons have been contacted to serve on the council. Regularly scheduled meetings will be held to examine our program needs. Additionally, several of these professionals have already provided input into the design of the program.

3. Need

Recent and anticipated changes in the training and credentialing of early childhood educators indicate that many potential degree candidates who are currently employed or who are likely to be employed in the field will need further education. Section 648A of the 1998 reauthorization of the Head Start Act mandates that by September 30, 2003, at least half of all Head Start teachers in center-based programs must have at minimum an associate of arts degree in early childhood education or a related field. While Louisiana currently does not require childcare workers to possess post-secondary degrees, trends around the country and the state suggest that such legislation is likely to be adopted in the near future. This trend was revealed when 56% of currently employed childcare workers (73 workers) attending continuing education programs at LSU-E in the fall of 1999 reported being either "interested" or "very interested" in pursuing an associate degree in early childhood education.

Several surrounding Head Start agencies indicate a clear need for a flexible and nearby degree opportunity for their employees. A telephone poll of Head Start directors from four surrounding parishes revealed that they employ a total of 76 non-degreed teachers. These Head Start agencies employ a total of 84 teacher aides, some of whom are likely to become degree candidates in order to facilitate job advancement. Finally, Head Start agency directors in the LSU-E service area have

indicated support of the development of an early childhood education program.

Students pursuing a bachelor's degree in elementary education or in early childhood education can enhance their skills and preparation while improving their employability by completing the associate degree in early childhood education. This need was underscored when 66% of students (75 students) enrolled in several basic education classes offered at LSU-E during the fall semester of 1999 reported being either "interested" or "very interested" in pursuing an associate degree in early childhood education because such a degree will offer a foundation upon which to build a four-year degree when they transfer into a senior college.

4. Students

It is projected that 23 students will enroll in the program during the first year, and that enrollment will increase to 40 students for Year Two. In Year Three, 10 individuals will graduate from the program as new student enrollment increases to 55. Sixty (60) new students will enroll in the program in Year Four and 20 will graduate, while in Year Five, 65 students will enroll and another 20 will graduate.

5. Faculty

The reviewers and the staff had a concern regarding the adequacy of faculty resources for the proposed program which LSU-E addressed as follows:

- Q. Minimal information on current faculty was provided, and it did not appear that any were specifically trained in early childhood education. The third year is too late to hire an early childhood professor, as faculty must be employed prior to program implementation.
- A. Current faculty members are qualified to teach required courses in the early childhood curriculum appropriate to their disciplines according to SACS guidelines. LSU-E has established a budget line for a full-time early childhood faculty position. Upon approval of the program, a search will be conducted to fill this position with a Ph.D.-credentialed individual.

6. Library and Other Special Resources

Library and other educational support services expenditures are projected at \$3,000 for Year One and \$1,000 per year for subsequent years. The reviewers and the staff had a concern regarding the adequacy of library resources which LSU-E addressed as follows:

- Q. Library resources are inadequate.
- A. The library has agreed to increase its original allocation for the early childhood program to \$3,000 the first year and \$1,000 each subsequent year. Government documents onsite include several resources, such as *Young Child* and the *National Institute on*

Early Childhood Development and Education publications, which are readily available to our students. Current holdings in education number approximately 1,000 titles, with key journals indicated on the attached list. Furthermore, resources are available through LOUIS to access journals/text not currently available on the LSU-E campus. We agree that our collection should be expanded and will subscribe to those journals suggested by the consultants. We feel that with these modifications, the proposed budget is sufficient to support the new program.

7. Facilities and Equipment

The reviewers and the staff had a concern regarding the adequacy of existing facilities and equipment which LSU-E addressed as follows:

- Q. The facilities and services are not adequate for the program. The placements for field experiences need to include at least one model program, preferably at the institution. If the institution cannot create some sort of laboratory nursery school or child care, the institution must take significant steps to ensure that the program of at least one placement (that all students experience) approaches model programming.
- A. While an on-campus nursery/pre-school is not possible at this time, the university continues to investigate the possibility of establishing such a facility in the future. However, model programs exist at several of LSU-E's current proposed observation sites, such as Highland Elementary's inclusive pre-kindergarten program and Acadia Parish's Head Start program, to allow students observation of the best current practices in early childhood education.

8. Administration

The proposed program will be administered through the Division of Liberal Arts.

9. Accreditation

The institution has informed the Board of Regents that it will seek accreditation of this program from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); despite the fact that the Board does not mandate accreditation for programs of this nature. Application for accreditation will occur approximately three years after the degree program is accepted. The staff commends the institution for pursuing this voluntary accreditation.

10. Costs

Total projected costs for the program are \$33,500 for Year One, \$25,289 of which will come from reallocation of existing funds and the remaining \$8,211 from student tuition and fees. The costs for subsequent years are noted as follows and are all covered by additional student tuition and fee revenues: \$14,280 for Year Two, \$23,205 for Year Three, and \$28,560 for Year Four.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The staff agrees that the proposed program falls within the role, scope, and mission of LSU at Eunice and a strong rationale of need is evident. The institution has satisfactorily addressed all weaknesses and problematic areas which reviewers and Regents' staff identified. Accordingly, the staff recommends approval.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant approval for the proposed Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education (CIP Code 13.1204) at Louisiana State University at Eunice. In accordance with Board of Regents Academic Affairs Policy 2.13, no professional accreditation is mandated for this program.